

Covid-19

----- Guidance for practices



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Please be aware that this is a rapidly evolving situation.

Implementing cancer guidelines during Covid-19

During the Covid-19 pandemic we have seen significant reductions in the number of people diagnosed with cancer compared to last year. While some of these numbers have recovered, some are still well below average, particularly lung cancer.

The reasons are multifactorial but include:

1. Fewer people presenting to primary care
 - a. Perceptions about access
 - b. Concerns about GP workload
 - c. Fears regarding accessing healthcare settings
2. Reduced access to diagnostic tests
 - a. Direct access diagnostics restricted
 - b. Barriers around transport for patients
3. Changes to referral pathways
 - a. Particularly lung, prostate and colorectal
 - b. 'Rejections' of 2WW referrals (note secondary care cannot reject a referral unless discussed and agreed with referring clinician)
4. Changes to screening programmes
 - a. Many regions saw National cancer screening programmes paused

Supporting early diagnosis of cancer: QOF QI module and PCN DES (early cancer diagnosis specification)

- Both cover early diagnosis of cancer.
- QOF QI module has been extended until the end of March 2022.
- PCN DES Early Cancer Diagnosis specification continues until the end of the five-year deal.

QOF QI module

NHS England have [provided full details of the revised QOF QI requirements for 21/22](#). Key points include:

- Practices need to complete the [national reporting template](#) and share this with their PCN.
- QI should focus on the following four areas (revised in light of Covid in September 2020):
 - Restoring cervical screening uptake to pre-Covid levels.
 - Building public confidence that general practice and other healthcare settings can be accessed safely.
 - Returning referrals to pre-Covid levels, improving the quality of referrals; and awareness of referral and testing pathways.
 - Having robust and consistent systems in place for [safety netting](#).

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Further support with these modules is available on the [Cancer Research UK website](#). Macmillan have also published a very helpful primary care toolkit to support practices with both [early cancer diagnosis](#) and improving [cancer screening uptake](#).

PCN DES

The PCN DES 'Early Cancer Diagnosis Specification' started in April 2020 and continues until the end of the five year contract. Further details can be [found here](#). There are four main domains:

- Review referral processes.
- Contribute to improving local uptake of National Cancer Screening Programmes.
- Support delivery through a community of practice.
- Learning from others.

Further support with these modules is available on the [Cancer Research UK website](#).

Further resources for practices and PCNs

- **Gateway-C:** free resources for General Practice to help improve cancer outcomes
 - [Gateway-C](#)
- **Macmillan UK:** General resources for supporting practices
 - [Resources for GPs](#)
- **Cancer Research UK:** Resources for health professionals
 - [Health Professional Covid-19 and Cancer Hub](#)
 - [Recognising and referring suspected lung cancer during the pandemic](#)
 - [CRUK NICE body map infographic](#)
- **RCGP:** Early Diagnosis of Cancer Significant Event Analysis Toolkit
 - [RCGP SEA toolkit](#)